

"Le Bouton de Rose" made him feel quite young again. The success of " L'Assommoir " had unnerved him, whereas he now seemed to have got back to his twentieth year. He needed to be imbued with an angry fighting spirit, said he, in order to write the many volumes which were required to complete his Bougon-Macquart series.

" Une Page d'Amour " was about this time issued serially by "Le Bien Public," whose readers took it more quietly than they had taken " L'Assommoir "; but when it appeared as a volume¹ Zola was accused of having stolen his plot from a novel called " Les Amours d'un Homrne Laid," by a Madame Berton, *nee* Samson. It may be said at once that there are several points of resemblance between, the plots of these stories. A young widow, a doctor, and a sickly child are prominent characters in both. At the same time there is great difference of treatment; and Zola, on hearing of the accusation, which first emanated from a journal called "La Paix Sociale," at once wrote to it: "I have never read Madame Berton-Samson's story, and until today I was ignorant of the existence both of the author and of the work."

To an unprejudiced person it may well seem that the similarity existing between his story and Madame Berton's

was due solely to the long arm of coincidence. But of course his enemies asserted that he lied. According to them

¹ "Une Page d'Amour," Paris, Charpentier, 1878, 18mo, vii-486 pages (genealogical tree of the Rougon-Macquarts); seventy-fifth thousand on sale in 1893 when the series was completed', ninety-seventh thousand in 1903. Illustrated edition : Paris, Librairie du Bibliophile (Jouaust), 1884, 2 vols. crown 8vo, iv-261 and 287 pages; portrait and ten designs by Ed. Dantan, etched by Duvivier, ornaments by G-iacomelli. Impressions on various papers, Dutch, India, Japanese, etc. Another illustrated edition, Paris, 1894, with etchings and woodcuts designed by F. TheVenot.